

Haunts of Jinns

Chap. XLIII

- 776 name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate) and will cast a stone
824 into the bush. Hence 'ausaj bushes are always seen surrounded by a
pile of stones at the base. Though men will usually joke about this
if questioned, the superstition remains nevertheless deep in their hearts,
and they take no risks.

HAUNTS OF JINNS

- 776 There are two spots believed to be special haunts of Jinns in North-
824 East Arabia:

Abraq al Khalijah is vaguely but widely reputed to be a place where a meteorite fell some seventy years ago. I have not yet visited it, but its position lies in Sa'udi Arabia, at the southern end of the Shaqq depression and close to the south-west corner of the Kuwait Neutral Zone. Every Kuwaiti Badawin knows the place but pretends to fear to go near it as it is said to be the home of Jinns. It has been flown over and examined from the air by certain geologists (in 1932), who were greatly interested.

According to them it consists of a hole in the ground some 4 acres in extent with cliff-like sides about 24 feet high. The 'Awazim and 'Ajman particularly fear to approach the place.

- 776 'Ain al 'Abd.—This lies about 30 miles east and slightly north of
824 Abraq al Khalijah, and stands on the southern edge of the Kuwait Neutral Zone close to the marshy area known as the Maqtah, which is undoubtedly caused by various salty springs. The whole marsh is covered by 'ausaj bushes, the plant which, according to Badawin lore, is dangerous to cut lest you be haunted by evil spirits. The actual 'Ain consists of a pool of water 40 feet across and some 6 feet below the surface of the surrounding country. In the centre of the pool there is a spring which surges out of the ground. The water is strongly impregnated with sulphur and smells like bad eggs for a mile round. The pool flows away by a channel; whether natural or artificial I do not know, and eventually the water finds its way to the sea some 10 miles away.

The Arabs tell the story of how a "black thing", they know not what, lives in the centre of the pool with head like a Negro. This animal or Jinn every now and then comes to the surface, shows itself and disappears again. At other times the thing is said to come out of

823

823 ETHNOGEOGRAPHY--notions about water; ideas about hydrographic phenomena (e.g., oceans and seas, waves and tides, currents and whirlpools, rivers and streams, lakes and springs, floods); ideas about topographic phenomena (e.g., hills and mountains, canyons and valleys, caves and grottoes, striking natural formations, volcanoes and earthquakes); notions about minerals, metals, and precious stones; geographical and geological lore; directions (e.g., upstream and downstream, cardinal points); ideas about the beauty of nature; associated behavior patterns (e.g., attempts to quell earthquakes); etc. See also:

Geographical environment	13	Drought relief	731
Settlements	26	Flood myths and mythical cataclysms	773
Place names	103	Nature spirits and monomers	776
Land use	311	Surveying	804
Water supply	319	Development of scientific geology and geography	815
Routes and maps	487		

THE BEDOUIN OF THE DESERT 29

parently meeting with no great obstacle on the way. In⁵⁷⁴
five minutes everybody is filled to repletion. Pounds of²⁶⁴
meat have been consumed and bushels of rice. The side
dishes are empty. Enormous wooden bowls of butter-
milk are brought in and the meal washed down with great
draughts of this favorite Arab drink. It is not remark-^[513]
able that after a feast everybody expects to take a nap.
So ends the festivity and the Bedouin settles down once
again to his meager and poverty-stricken existence in
the desert.

Life as a nomad shepherd brings the Bedouin into³⁴²
naked and constant contact with nature. He is out of⁵¹¹
doors almost all of the time, and his tent with its rents
and holes hardly serves to separate him from the outside
world to any significant degree even when he is inside.
The sun over him by day and the moon and stars by
night, the long stretches of sand and the rough rocky
plains, the sand storms which are the terror of the des-
ert, the fierce heat of the summer and the frosts of the
winter, all of these are his constant companions. He¹⁵¹
learns to know the wilderness as few know it. The
tracks of the various animals in the sand are to him an
easily legible history of the happenings of several days
back. Thus he lives not simply in contact with nature¹⁸¹
but rather immersed in it. The desert may be cruel, but
he pines away if transplanted. His life may be hard,
but he wants nothing else.

Yet strangely enough, in spite of his intense love for¹⁶¹
the desert and its freedom, all the beauties in nature¹²³
around him fall on blind eyes as far as the Bedouin is
concerned. Even the desert sunset and the moon-lit
sand dunes apparently stir no responsive chord in his
heart. It is as if all such things had been stripped off

151 and cast away as useless encumbrances in the stern fight
 0823 for life. He is the victim of his environment in that
 [51] he suffers so desperately from poverty and want. His
 165 clothes hang in tatters and rags; his tent is cold in winter
 181 and hot in summer; his food is reduced nearly to the
 limit of bare subsistence. Most of his children die be-
 cause of the unsuitable food, the hard conditions of life
 and the ignorance of the parents. The dirt and disorder
 in which he lives beggar description. Out of this soil
 springs one of the freest and most unconquerable spirits
 in the world, but even so it is impossible to believe that
 its finest development is attainable under such handicaps.
 The terrible thing is not that the condition in which he
 lives distresses his sensitive spirit, but precisely that it
 does not distress him at all. The Bedouin may claim to
 have conquered poverty. He stands forth uncrushed by
 its heaviest load, but his indomitable spirit has neverthe-
 less paid a price, and a heavy price, for that victory.

000 Bedouin life, however, in spite of this terrible poverty
 and lack of the amenities that we are accustomed to re-
 gard as necessary even to existence, has in it many char-
 acteristics that we of the luxurious and effete West might
 emulate with benefit. Throughout the earth and almost
 throughout history, men have dreamed of equality. France
 ran with blood a hundred and thirty years ago be-
 cause of man's search for it. Russia is red with the same
 struggle now. Men talk about it and dream about it
 wherever men see visions and dream dreams. In inland
 Arabia men practise it, and there is a charm in the dirty,
 poverty-cursed, arid desert that will be searched for in
 vain throughout the pampered and self-satisfied world
 outside. His sense of equality with all the world is the
 breath of life to a nomad Arab, and his spirit stands

Walking Stones and Singing Sands

Chap. XXII

173 that it was he, instead of screaming or crying as most women would have done, she merely replied, *Wa na'am ya Abu Turki, wa na'am*. Later indeed she showed more of her pluck, by trying to kill 'Abdul 'Aziz by an evil spell.

On our return journey, and at the end of a pleasant day, we stopped some 'Awazim milch camels by the wayside, and had a drink of milk each. 'Addas disgraced himself by drinking five pint bowls of milk straight off and without a pause. The baby camels were delightful in their friendliness, and nosed their little faces into ours in most affectionate manner—nor were the mothers in any way frightened or anxious.

A CHAT WITH RÁSHID BIN FAHAD

873

During one of my many pleasant journeys among the 'Ajman tribe, I met on 10th May, 1935, an interesting person called Ráshid bin Fahad of the Al 'Arja section of the 'Ajman. I found him in the tent of Anaizan ibn Munaikhir.

Ráshid told me many stories of the Murra tribe and their life and said:

(a) Among other things he had been south of Jabrin to Magainama wells (see Philby's *Empty Quarter*), and on to Um al Hadida and even south of that place, and

(b) He had heard of *walking stones* (see Philby) but had only seen a few once. This was when he was on a raid with the late Dhaidan al Hithlain, Shaikh of the 'Ajman. His leader and many others had examined the stones carefully, and said they were inspired by Jinns. What they saw were pebbles about the size of a pigeon's egg lying with others on gravelly ground. These pebbles had clearly been dragged or rolled some six feet along the ground, as their tracks showed clear behind them. Only a few selected stones had done this, the others had clearly never moved—so it could not have been a strong gale. Besides, he said, a wind would have obliterated the tracks.

(c) He had heard the Murra people talk of singing sands, but had never heard them himself. The Murra had told him the noise was the work of Jinns, who also made other noises in the desert like children crying, and more often than not sounds of pestle and mortar (coffee making), as if a camp was near. Ráshid emphasised that the pheno-

Jinns' Work

Chap. XXII

mena were common to the Al Rimal or Al Ramla (Rub'al Khālī) 823 ●
and were always the work of Jinns (spirits).

(d) Individual Murra, he said, themselves often came out of the 828
great desert "mad", which made them sing and laugh in strange
manner. This was undoubtedly due to Jinn influence.

(e) The word Rub' al Khālī, he said, was a *hadhar* or townsman's 369
expression, and Badawin did not know the name, and he himself had 103
only once or twice heard it.

(f) Rāshid knew seven of Philby's guides personally when he made
his great trans-desert journey; one of them, Falah abu Ja'sha, was his
cousin. (See page 10 of Philby's book; also first part of this chapter.)

THE DEAD WOMAN WHO NURSED HER CHILD

(Recounted by Dhuwaihī bin Kharmīt of the 'Awazim on 1st 539
April, 1935, in camp at Malah, Kuwait.)

A man of the 'Awazim was once travelling near Hail with his young
wife. The latter was with child, and in a gorge between some high
rocky hills she suddenly gave birth to a baby boy, but in the process
died. Her husband did all he could for her, but as he was alone, he
could not save her. He buried her by putting her body in a small
cave nearby, and filled up the entrance with stones. Loth to remove
the child, and knowing it would shortly die for lack of milk, he laid
it on its mother's breast with her left arm round it, and put the
mother's left breast to the baby's mouth. He then rode away.

Nine months later a party of Badawin of the same tribe happened
to wander by and camp close to the spot where the woman and child
had been buried. Knowing the story they went to the cave's mouth
to see if the wall was intact. To their surprise they found a few stones
removed and a hole in the wall; outside on the sand they found the
tracks of a child's feet running all over the ground. In great fear and
filled with superstition they quickly rode away from the haunted
place. In course of time the Badawin told the father, who hastened
to the spot, and found the hole in the wall and the small footmarks.
Looking inside the cave, he found a live boy-child sitting and prattling
beside the mummified form of his dead wife. The mother's body was
all dried up, except her left eye and the left side of her face, her left